



**For Immediate Release**

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**Avon High School student wins first place in statewide  
VFW Voice of Democracy essay contest;  
Her essay is now entered for a national scholarship prize**

The Avon Gildo T. Consolini VFW Post 3272, and its Auxiliary, congratulates Kate Howley, 11<sup>th</sup> grade student at Avon High School, for winning First Place in the statewide 2015-2016 VFW Voice of Democracy (VOD) contest. Leading up to the statewide award, Howley also won First Place in the Avon Post and VFW 3<sup>rd</sup> District contests. Created by the national VFW in 1947, VOD is their premier scholarship program. It is open to high school students who are enrolled in a public, private or parochial high school or home study program in grades 9-12. It provides more than \$2 million in scholarships and incentives annually across the country. Contestants record a three to five-minute essay based on an annual patriotic theme.

This year's theme was **"My Vision for America."** Howley's essay was first read and scored by the Avon VFW then placed in district and state competition, with other students from around Connecticut. In congratulating Howley, Lee Wilson, Commander of the Avon VFW, stated, "this is the first time in recent memory that an Avon student has won this competition on the state level and we are pleased that she will be attending a national competition in Washington, D.C. from February 27-March 2 where her inspirational essay on patriotism for young adults will be heard. We know she will make Avon proud."

Howley's essay focuses on how young adults could and should become more involved in their community in order to keep national pride in the forefront of their lives. She laments that fact that when students say the Pledge of Alliance every morning at school, they do without the understanding of what

means. She writes, "I envision a future where people take such pride in their country that they address grievances with constructive action, including exercising their right to vote...Tomorrow morning, I will say the Pledge with the strongest voice I can muster, so that my vision of America can be realized by my generation." This statement is at the core of the values of what the Veterans of Foreign Wars believes in and why they went to war.

The first-place winner nationally, who competes with all the first-place VFW statewide winners, receives a \$30,000 scholarship that is paid directly to the recipient's American university, college or vocational/technical school. Howley will be among those competing for that top prize later this month.

The National Association of Secondary School Principals has placed this program on the NASSP National Advisory List of Contests and Activities for 2015-2016. The Voice of Democracy program is designed to foster patriotism by allowing students the opportunity to voice their opinion based on an annual theme. A copy of the entry form and rules can be found at <http://vfw.org/Community/Voice-of-Democracy/>

For more information on the next VOD contest, send an email to [commander@avonvfw.com](mailto:commander@avonvfw.com).

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